

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 11, 2004

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Jim Adams
John Barnett
Sharon Berry
Searcy Ewell
Lindi Johnson
Nola McKinney

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Beth Bourgeois
Pierre Curry
Jim Hill

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Maria Morais

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Ramona Sangalli
Buddy Spivey

DHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: Tom Gay

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Jim Hudson, Katy Morris, Coral Virden, Jim Pearson, Donna Birdwell, Lyndel Lybarger, Kara Mahan, Mary Cabaniss, Charlie Cain-Davis, Carolyn Holbrook

CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Mrs. Lindi Johnson called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA. Motion was made by Mr. Searcy Ewell to approve the agenda. Mr. John Barnett seconded the motion. ***Motion passed.***

INTRODUCTIONS. All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF 09/11/04 MINUTES. Motion was made by Mr. John Barnett to approve the minutes. Mr. Jim Adams seconded the motion. ***Motion passed.***

The Board Chairman welcomed Mrs. Beth Bourgeois to the Board. Mrs. Bourgeois replaces Mrs. Donna Hunt as the ex-officio board member representing AER.

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT - DSB Director extended congratulations to Board Member Maria Morais and husband David Bell on the recent birth of their second daughter.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) passed Congress and has been signed by the President. The Act provides much more emphasis on transition. Blind students need to be prepared when they graduate from high school to either go on to a job and/or training or other educational experiences.

Reauthorization - The Rehabilitation Act has not been reauthorized, but is expected to be addressed shortly after Congress reconvenes in January. Lately there is speculation that Rehabilitation may be transferred from the Education Department to the Labor Department.

Federal Budget – The omnibus budget passed and provides a small increase in federal funding for Vocational Rehabilitation, which means more state revenue will be needed to meet DSB's Maintenance of Effort (state matching requirement).

NCSAB - National Council of State Agencies for the Blind held its annual meeting in October in Nashville. Major issues discussed included the Workforce Investment Act; relations with the Social Security Administration; the Randolph-Sheppard Vending Program; and developing technologies for blind persons.

Advisory Committee of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock Rehabilitation Education Program– DSB continues to provide input each year concerning the UALR program. UALR is doing a phenomenal job in educating counselors and rehab teachers. Other universities are looking at duplicating the UALR approach to on-line and other courses.

Arkansas Ability Awards. Several DSB staff attended the second annual Arkansas Ability Awards luncheon ceremony hosted by Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. The event commends selected consumers for their achievements in the world of work and recognizes businesses, employers and other individuals who contribute to the success of individuals with disabilities.

The Committee of Licensed Blind Vendors met in November to discuss Vending Facility Program activities. The location at the Federal Building downtown will be redone. Renovations are expected to cost \$500,000. DSB's participation will be around \$45,000 to \$50,000. This will be a great business opportunity for a licensed blind vendor.

DSB was part of a multi-agency effort to co-sponsor the Disability Policy Consortium's Legislative Summit in North Little Rock in October. This is a very important meeting that occurs prior to each legislative session. All legislators and candidates are invited to discuss what they have done and what they plan to do for persons with disabilities during the coming session.

DSB also participated with Lions World Services for the Blind in their Advisory Council for Employment. Directors of a number of rehab agencies for the blind from all over the country are called upon to be a part of a committee that reviews LWSB programs and provides input on how to change the programs to assist blind individuals more effectively.

RSA Representative, Doug Lawton, conducted a Section 107 (Program) Review of DSB last May. We have not received the final results, but he did email us a final report card of related performance indicators, adding that we had met all standards and that in certain important selected areas our performance was "fantastic". In additional emails, Mr. Lawton forwarded the results of federal evaluation of DSB performances against national standards in six key areas. On the first national standard, (What is the change in employment outcome?), DSB consumers had to realize at least the same number of employment outcomes as the previous year, so the change had to be zero or more. The actual change was 11 additional employment outcomes (from 324 to 335).

The second standard was the percent of employment outcomes compared to the national standard. To meet this standard, at least 68.9% of the DSB consumers accepted for services had to realize an employment outcome. Rather than the 68.9% minimum, some 84.51% of DSB consumers realized employment outcomes. To meet the third national standard, at least 35.4% of employment outcomes must be competitive. DSB consumers achieved competitive employment in 68.33% of the cases. The fourth standard is the indicator of significant disability and has to be greater than or equal to 89%. Since all DSB consumers meet the federal guidelines of severe visual impairment, this number for DSB is automatically 100%. The fifth indicator, the earnings ratio, compares DSB consumer earnings against other Arkansas wages. To meet the national standard, DSB consumers must earn greater than or equal to .59 of the average wage for Arkansas. Rather than the .59 minimum, DSB consumers, in fact, earned .671 of that level.

The sixth national standard is the percent of consumers who are Self Supporting, and must be greater than or equal to 30.4%. Some 33.04% of DSB consumers were self-supporting.

For DSB performance to be deemed satisfactory overall, consumers had to achieve 4 out of 6 of the standards described previously. Because DSB consumers achieved 6 out of 6, besting some standards by considerable margins, Mr. Lawton thought it appropriate to commend DSB.

Budget – The budget process is running as smoothly as it can at this stage. DSB is only asking for appropriation, no additional state revenue. With Education being the legislative priority, we are lucky to just keep what we have. Legislative staff are in the process of drafting the DSB appropriation bill for the beginning of the session.

Medicaid Waiver – DSB is gaining on the Medicaid waiver process. DSB staff have participated in a telephone conference call and written a concept paper as required by federal officials. We refer to the waiver as a demonstration grant. If it is awarded to us it will directly affect Older Blind and Independent Living Services. The waiting list for our Older Blind program is currently averaging 90 people a month. This means that we get to these people when we can, due to the lack of staff. Hopefully, if the waiver comes through, we can do many things with the Older Blind program and Independent Living. Staff will have another conference call January 3, 2005 involving the Feds out of Baltimore, the Medicaid people in DHS, and Lyndel Lybarger and Kandy Cayce of DSB.

State Reorganization – We keep hearing rumors that DSB may be transferred out of the Department of Human Services and placed in Workforce Education. According to DHS Director, Kurt Knickrehm, there is really no attempt to do that at this point in time. We will keep you posted.

Helen Cunningham, the VR Counselor in Texarkana, has been with the agency and the state for 35 years and plans to retire in February of this year. The staff and the consumers are all going to miss Helen.

Consumer Satisfaction Survey – The Consumer Satisfaction Survey Committee gave a report in June recommending the structure of future consumer satisfaction surveys. The Needs Assessment Survey, conducted last year by Opinion Research Associates, is required by federal regulation every three years. The board recommended conducting the consumer satisfaction surveys also every three years, avoiding the years that the Needs Assessment is being conducted, so that consumers will not feel over surveyed.

Lyndel Lybarger, Donna Birdwell, Kara Mahan and the whole field staff deserve a lot of credit because last year's record performance has again been topped. We are up to a record 338 jobs acquired by blind people.

END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT.

ORDER OF PROGRAM FUNDING COMMITTEE– Mrs. McKinney reported that the committee held a teleconference and decided that, if DSB state funding were to be cut below the amount required to fully match all DSB programs, the first responsibility would be to those blind adults who need employment and retraining. Absent such a budget cut situation, the committee voted, at a minimum, to fully match the Older Blind Federal Grant and then to provide Older Blind whatever excess state funds may be available above that which is needed for the vocational rehabilitation program. Mrs. McKinney made a motion and recommended that the committee's report be adopted as a motion. Mr. John Barnett seconded the motion. ***Motion passed.***

ELECTION OF VICE –CHAIR AND SECRETARY – Mr. John Barnett nominated Mr. Searcy Ewell to another term as Vice-Chairman. Mr. Jim Adams seconded the nomination. ***Mr. Ewell was elected unanimously.*** Mr. Searcy Ewell nominated Mrs. Nola McKinney to another term as Secretary. Mr. Jim Adams seconded the nomination. ***Mrs. McKinney was elected unanimously.***

In June, 2005, the following DSB Board positions are up for appointment by the Governor: American Council of the Blind, National Federation of the Blind, Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) and Arkansas Lions. The affected groups should be forwarding their nominations to the Governor.

LEGISLATIVE PROCESS - The legislative session will start around the middle of January. DSB's appropriation bill should be drafted sometime soon. A listing of the legislators, by county, will be on Radio Reading Services so that people can access it and see who represents them and some of the issues that come up that affect DSB. There will also be a link on DSB's website.

NATIONAL CONVENTIONS - It was noted that the \$1,200 maximum stipend currently provided by DSB to sponsor the ACB and NFB board representatives to attend their respective national conferences is insufficient. Mr. Jim Adams made a motion to increase the maximum amount to \$1,500.00 per stipend. Mr. John Barnett seconded the motion. ***Motion passed.*** In 2005, The American Council of the Blind convention will be held in Las Vegas, Nevada and the National Federation of the Blind Convention will be held in Louisville, Kentucky.

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER REPORT (DRC) – No representative was present. No report was submitted.

ARKANSAS INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL REPORT (AILC) - No representative was present. A report is contained in the board packet.

CONSUMER INPUT – The American Council of the Blind State Convention will be held in Little Rock at the LaQuinta Inn on Interstate 30, the last weekend in April. A vision fair will be held in Hot Springs, January 27, 2005, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Garland County Library.

Committee Work Recognition – On behalf of DSB, Mrs. Katy Morris presented Mr. Searcy Ewell with a certificate commending him for his work with the DSB Board Employee of the Year Recognition Committee for 2004. Mr. Ewell had been unavailable in September, when DSB had commended the work of other committee members.

Schedule of Next Meeting - March 12, 2005 at the Donaghey Plaza South Building, 700 Main Street, First floor Conference Rooms A & B at 10:00 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nola McKinney
Secretary